Johnny Cash exhibit to end August 10

Johnny Cash fans have flocked to Temple’s Railroad and Heritage Museum to have a look at photos from Cash’s 1968 concerts at California’s Folsom State Prison.

“1968: A Folsom Redemption” is by far one of the most rocking exhibits we’ve had so far,” says museum development assistant Jordyn Kinsler. “Guests have come from all over Central Texas to see this exhibit and have been in love with it . . . reactions on our social media [reveal that] guests really get a kick out of the entire exhibit . . . This exhibit is truly a wonder to see . . .”

Folks who haven’t visited the exhibit yet have until Saturday, August 10, to examine 31 color and black/white images in the museum’s airy second floor exhibit room. Not only do the photos depict close-ups of the singer whose shaky career zoomed after those concerts (He made the cover of Life magazine in 1969.), but they also capture Cash and his interactions with June Carter before and after their 1968 marriage.

One January 1968 caption quotes June: “You know why the prisoners like Johnny so much? They know he’s been in trouble before and looks as mean as they do. They identify with him.”

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RR&HM is located at 315 West Avenue B in Temple’s historic Santa Fe depot. Museum hours are Tuesday-Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admission: $4 (ages 13-59), $3 (ages 60+), $2 (ages 5-12), children under 5 free

Two dates left to enjoy ‘Salado Legends’

“The play begins at 8:15 p.m., and by then the shade at Tablerock’s Goodnight Amphitheatre creates a comfortable ambience for guests at the 27th season of the historical musical drama,” promises director Donnie Williams.

Written by playwright/lyricist Jackie Mills, “Salado Legends” combines Salado history with fictional storytelling to describe life in Central Texas in the 1850s.

The concessions building will open at 7 p.m. Fat Boys BBQ of Temple will serve dinner at 7:15 p.m. Required reservations for play tickets and dinner are available by making contact with www.CentralTexasTickets.com. Play tickets are available online as well as onsite.

‘Blazing Family Trails’ genealogy meet set October 11-13 in Houston

The Texas State Genealogical Society’s annual family history conference will occur at the Omni Houston Hotel Westside, 13210 Katy Freeway and will feature 56 unique lectures and four workshops on topics of interest to family historians. Included will be a workshop on using DNA as a tool for researching family connections, ethnic research methods and problem-solving.

The Omni has extended special room rates three days prior and three days after the conference, giving attendees an opportunity to visit the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical research in downtown Houston and other local repositories. More information is available at www.bxsgs.org/2019-conference/registration/ and communications@txsgs.org.
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A sign at the exhibit quotes two journalists from the Star-Free Press in Ventura – Dan Poush, writer, and Gene Beley, photographer – who bought $32 round-trip tickets from Ventura to Sacramento to attend the concerts: “Our paper usually wrote negative stories about Cash like police responding to the singer’s neighbors’ complaints about his blasting Christmas music from the top of his house, speeding around town in his Cadillac, smuggling pep pills from Mexico in his guitar, the 500-acre fire he caused in Los Padres National Park.” After the concerts these two surely had better things to write about.

The late Reverend Floyd Gressett (1903-1995) of Avenue Community Church in Ventura had long ministered to Folsom and San Quentin inmates when he became acquainted with Cash and served an important role in arranging Cash’s concerts in both prisons. A story long-circulated is that a Folsom inmate asked Rev. Gressett if Cash would sing for inmates at Folsom. Folsom is located some 20 miles from state capital Sacramento; San Quentin, the state’s oldest prison, is in Marin County north of San Francisco. Both prisons were established in the 19th century.

The RR&HM exhibit’s photo captions include tidbits visitors enjoy: backstage in March, 1969, with Merle Haggard; celebrating with June at their first anniversary bash in Anaheim; color photographs of the couple walking in Folsom Prison Yard, one with Johnny in front of a forbidding guard tower. Also on exhibit are photos of June Carter’s mother, “Mother” Maybelle Carter, known as a “pioneer” in country music, who toured with a variety of country groups and played guitar, banjo and autoharp.

Cash’s association with Haggard began in 1958 when Cash performed at San Quentin, and 18-year-old Haggard was serving a 15-year term for burglary, a sentence later reduced to two years. He gave Cash credit for inspiring him to begin a career that reached 38 #1 country hits including Okie from Muskogee. Of Cash’s first prison performance Haggard recalled: “He had the right attitude. He chewed gum, looked arrogant and made illegal hand signals at the guards. He did everything the prisoners wanted to do. He was a mean mother from the South who was there because he loved us. When he walked away, everyone there had become a Johnny Cash fan.”

In addition to all the photographs, exhibited together for the first time, museum visitors can look at two of Cash’s guitars, see an album made in The Holy Land and sit down in front of a television set and watch a video, A Concert Behind Prison Walls, recorded at Tennessee State Prison in 1977. With Cash on the video are Foster Brooks, who sang “If you only loved me half as much as I love you,” and Roy Clark and Linda Ronstadt. Cash performed six numbers.

In New York’s Village Voice in June, 1968, review Richard Goldstein wrote of the Folsom prison album: “Cash’s voice is as thick and gritty as ever, but filled with the kind of emotionalism you seldom find in rock . . . His songs are simple and sentimental, his message clear the feeling of hopelessness – even amid the cheers and whistles – is overwhelming You come away drained, as the record fades out to the sound of men booing their warden and a guard’s gentle, but deadly warning, “ Easy now.”

Piranha Records of Round Rock furnished two vintage vinyl 78s for museum visitors to spin on a whirling turntable. All this plus a souvenir activity book for the youngsters! A.L.
FYI: Bell County Genealogical Society’s upcoming programs

August 20 – Genealogists Guide to Dropbox (courtesy of Ginny Guinn)
Dropbox is a free subscription Cloud-based service that allows you to synchronize all types of files among all of your computing devices. It is ideal for files that you want easy access to from mobile devices because so many other apps are compatible with Dropbox. In this 30-minute video, we will learn more about what it is and how you can use it in conjunction with your genealogy research.

September 17 – Beginning Evernote
Evernote is a free tech tool that enables you to instantly capture and retrieve everything that is important to your research. Cloud storage of your notes allows you to access them from any computing device, no matter where you are. OCR adds another level of search-ability.

October 15 – The Big Picture in Little Details
Often times the road to assembling the big picture in your genealogy is paved with lots of little details. In this video webinar class, we’ll explore examples of how to inspect the big picture genealogical problems we face and identify the little clues that can use to move our research forward.

The Bell County Genealogical Society meets on the third Tuesday of each month from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the third-floor McLane Room at Temple Public Library, 100 West Adams Avenue in Temple. Programs follow business meetings; in December the society holds its annual Christmas party.

The Bell County Historical Commission (Box 712, Belton, Texas 76513) publishes a newsletter in January, April, July and October. Editorial material should be sent to Annette Lucksinger, 811 Oakhill Drive, Killeen, Texas 76541. Email: annettelucksinger@yahoo.com. Phone: 254-681-1952

Information is available at the BCHC office on the first floor of the courthouse, where volunteers work Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 12 noon assisting residents and visitors with directions to county facilities, cemeteries and other places of interest. Phone: 254-933-5917

Commission officers for 2019-2020 are Nancy Kelsey, chairman; Judy Tyler, vice-chairman; Donna Gott, secretary; Kathy Taylor, treasurer; and Gloria Harris, reporter. Committee chairmen include Rae Schmuck, finance/budget; Shirley Holleman, historical marker/research; Annette Lucksinger, newsletter; Sandy Mason, history appreciation/programs; Nancy Kelsey, cemetery; Sandy Mason, grants; and Kim Kroll, historical preservation.
Earlier U.S. President, a child’s toy, a Central Texas monument and October’s Great Delta Bear Affair in Rolling Fork, MS

Born a slave about 1848, Holt Collier belonged to prominent General Thomas Hinds, a veteran of the 1815 Battle of New Orleans. Hinds was part of a group that explored the state and chose Jackson as the site of its capital city, named for, of course, General Andrew Jackson, hero of the Battle of New Orleans whose force of some 4,500 hundred American militiamen – many of whom were crack shots from Kentucky and Tennessee – prevented the advance of about 7,500 British soldiers under Sir Edward Pakenham on January 8, 1815. In about half an hour, the British retreated. Pakenham had died; British casualties totaled nearly 2,000 (killed, wounded, missing); the Americans lost only eight killed and 13 wounded. The encounter occurred after the war was over but had an important effect on American morale, and it was to be the last armed encounter between the U.S. and Britain.

The slave Holt Collier joined the Hinds men as they left for the Civil War. Although his master had told him he was too young to fight, this master/slave relationship was fairly common during that conflict. Collier had proved earlier to be an excellent marksman; his primary job on the Hinds plantation had been to provide bear meat for all those who lived on the property. During the war, he was allowed to don a Confederate uniform and served under General Lawrence Sullivan Ross, namesake of Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas, and Texas A&M’s Ross Volunteers. Holt worked as a cowboy on Ross’ Texas ranch after hostilities ended, having learned horsemanship during the conflict.

Holt’s work as a cowboy is recalled today at Waco’s Indian Spring Park in a sculpture project, Branding the Brazos. Three sculptures portraying three mounted cowboys driving a herd of longhorns, erected in 2014 at the base of the Waco Suspension Bridge, include on 14-foot statue of a black cowboy on horseback. Sculptor Robert Summers says he modeled the black cowboy’s figure from an old photo of Holt Collier. The 2200-acre Holt Collier National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi, established in 2004 and named in his honor.

President Theodore Roosevelt – an avid sportsman, hunter, conservationist – engaged Holt Collier in 1902 to serve as tracker in a Mississippi bear hunt. After Holt and his dogs cornered a 250-pound bear, Holt sounded a trumpet to alert Roosevelt. But the bear killed one of Holt’s dogs, leading to Holt’s whacking the bear’s head with his rifle and tying the bear to a tree. When Roosevelt arrived, he refused to shoot the forlorn, helpless animal. The incident led to a satirical cartoon, which eventually led to the development of the Teddy Bear. Holt again served as Roosevelt’s tracker in 1907, after which Roosevelt gave Collier a Winchester rifle.

Today, Mississippi’s Great Delta Bear Affair in the tiny community of Rolling Fork has inspired a slew of bear-related events and projects, including a Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks’ Black Bear Program, begun some 15 years ago to research the state’s bear population, fewer than 50 at the time and now estimated to have tripled. Each year’s GDBA has a new “Teddy Bear” to sell, along with t-shirts and the like. Theme of this year’s GDBA is Bearfootin’ it Home, illustrated with dancing black bears; one plays a harmonica, another strums a guitar that ends in a pitchfork. This year’s festival is scheduled for Saturday, October 26, with a wide variety of events. Information is available at https://greatdeltabearaffair.org/events. A.L.